



Iran Update, April 12, 2024

Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Amin Soltani, Kathryn Tyson, and Brian Carter
Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate with one another to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—an umbrella organization of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—threatened on April 12 to renew its attack campaign targeting US forces in Iraq.[1] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq rejected any bilateral agreement between the United States and Iraq that permits US forces to remain in Iraq. The group threatened to “torment [the United States] with fire” if US forces are not removed from Iraq.

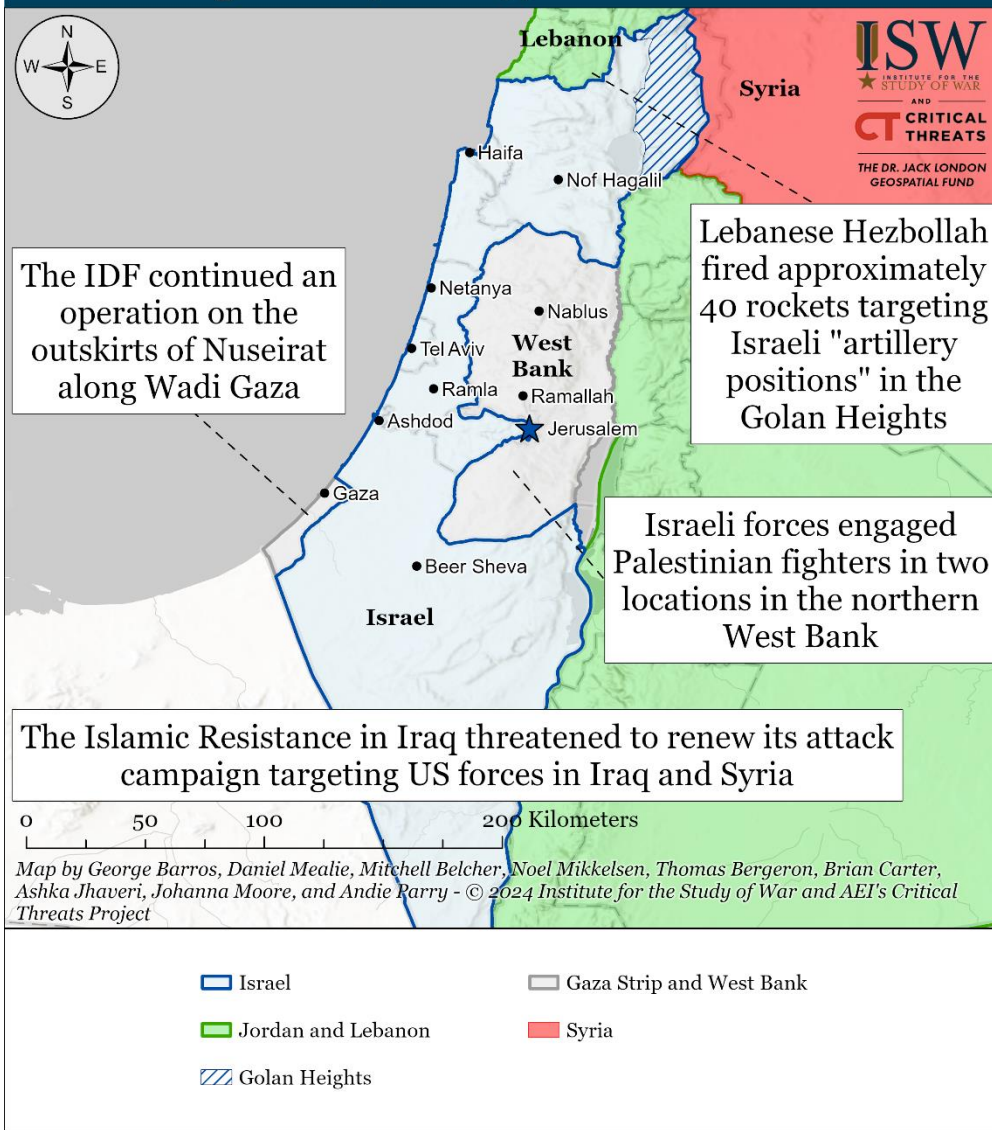
Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani will meet with US President Joe Biden in Washington, DC, on April 15 to discuss the trajectory of US-Iraqi relations under the Strategic Framework Agreement.[2] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq's threat follows Sudani's article in *Foreign Affairs* on April 11 in which he articulated his intent to expand US and Iraqi cooperation beyond security and military affairs to include economic, agricultural, industrial, technological, and energy cooperation.[3] Sudani's articulated policy is currently at odds with the demands set by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which include the full withdrawal of US forces.

CTP-ISW previously warned that some Iranian-backed Iraqi militias may regard Sudani's visit to Washington as a decisive moment and could decide to resume attacks targeting US forces if the visit does not result in tangible steps toward removing US forces from Iraq.[4] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has paused attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria since February 2024, when the United States killed a senior Kataib Hezbollah commander in Baghdad.[5] The pause in attacks coincided with the start of negotiations between Washington and Baghdad over the status of the US-led international coalition in Iraq.[6] Asaib Ahl al Haq Secretary General Qais Khazali suggested on April 10 that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias could resume attacking US forces if Sudani's upcoming visit to Washington, DC fails to force the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.[7]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iraq:** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—an umbrella organization of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias— threatened to renew its attack campaign targeting US forces in Iraq.
- **Northern Gaza Strip:** The IDF killed multiple Hamas personnel affiliated with Hamas' governance structures and military organizations in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.
- The IDF continued an operation on the outskirts of Nuseirat along Wadi Gaza.
- **West Bank:** Israeli forces killed senior Hamas commander Muhammad Omar Daraghmeh in Tubas on April 12.
- **Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights:** Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least four attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel.
- **Iran:** US CENTCOM Commander Gen. Michael Kurilla continued to meet with Israeli officials in Israel to discuss preparations for a possible Iranian attack targeting Israel.
- **Yemen:** US CENTCOM intercepted a Houthi anti-ship ballistic missile over the Red Sea.

Israel-Hamas War as of April 12, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed multiple Hamas personnel affiliated with Hamas' governance structures and military organizations on April 11 in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike that killed the head of Hamas' internal security in Jabalia, Radwan Muhammad Abdallah Radwan.[8] Palestinian media reported that Radwan was the director of a police station and that he coordinated aid distribution.[9] The IDF said that Radwan was

also a member of Hamas' military wing and directed other Palestinian fighters to take over humanitarian aid trucks in the area.[10] The IDF also killed another senior official in Hamas' internal security operations in Jabalia and another fighter in an unspecified Hamas battalion in Jabalia.[11]

Hamas remains determined to reconstitute itself militarily and reassert its authority in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has made attempts to coopt and undermine possible alternatives to its rule, facilitate trade, and rehabilitate its local police in the northern Gaza Strip.[12] The IDF is conducting operations in the northern Gaza Strip to disrupt Hamas' attempts to reconstitute its governing authority.[13] Israel has previously targeted members of Hamas' police and internal security apparatus. The Civil Police and the Hamas-controlled Interior Ministry's Internal Security Forces in Gaza both employ fighters from the Hamas military wing.[14]

The IDF continued an operation on the outskirts of Nuseirat along Wadi Gaza on April 12. Elements of the IDF 162nd Division, including the Nahal and 401st Brigades, killed Palestinian fighters and destroyed military infrastructure.[15] Israeli forces raided a school in Zahra, north of Nuseirat. The IDF discovered weapons and a residence at this location. The IDF reported that Hamas fighters were staying at the residence.[16] The IDF 215th Artillery Brigade supported ground operations in the central Gaza Strip.[17]

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed that its fighters detonated a minefield and used an explosively formed penetrator to target Israeli armor in a complex attack at a military position north of Nuseirat.[18] Palestinian militias, including PIJ and Hamas, claimed several attacks targeting Israeli forces in Zahra in mid-March 2024.[19] The militias may have infiltrated into Zahra and other areas of southern Gaza City from areas of the central Gaza Strip that the IDF has not yet cleared. The militias also likely reactivated dormant cells after the Israelis decreased the number of IDF troops in the northern Strip in late December.

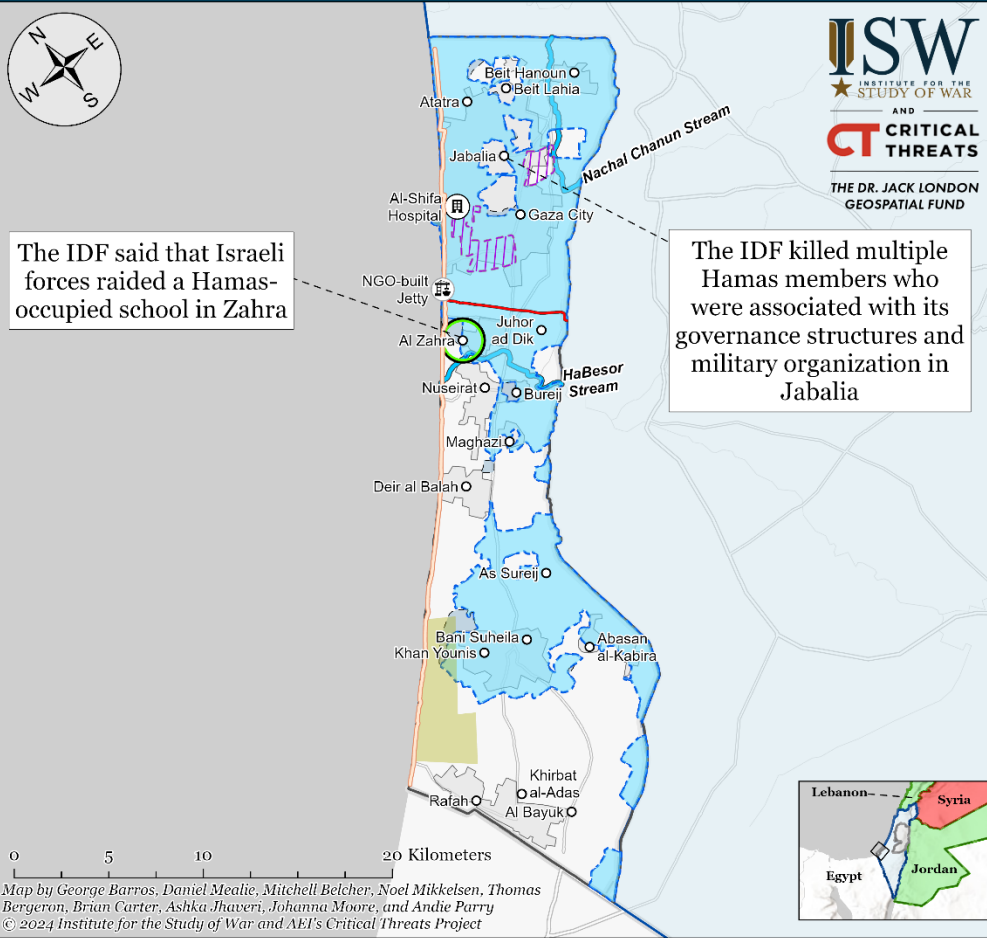
The IDF Air Force struck more than 60 targets in the Gaza Strip on April 12, including underground military infrastructure.[20]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of April 12, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



The IDF said that Israeli forces raided a Hamas-occupied school in Zahra

The IDF killed multiple Hamas members who were associated with its governance structures and military organization in Jabalia

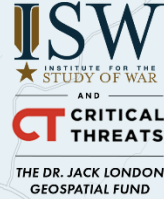


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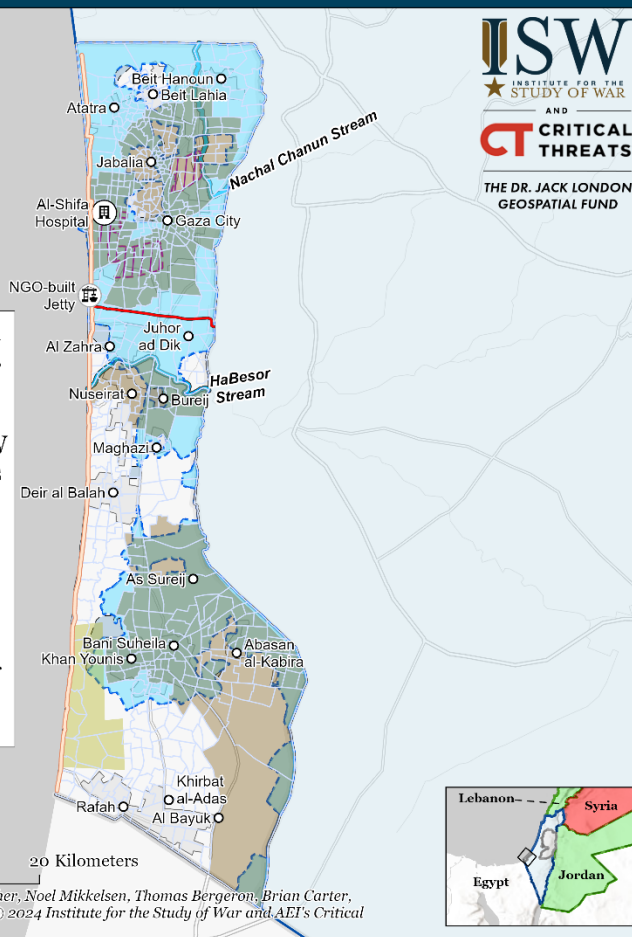
- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
- Israeli-Built Highway Route 749
- Significant Water Obstacles
- Densely Urban Areas
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip as of April 12, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
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A humanitarian aid convoy entered the northern Gaza Strip on April 12 through a new crossing.[21] The convoy underwent security checks at the Kerem Shalom crossing before entering the Gaza Strip. The aid delivery was coordinated by the IDF and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)—a department within the Israeli Defense Ministry—“as part of efforts to enhance the humanitarian aid corridors to the Gaza Strip in general, and to the north in particular.”[22] The IDF said on April 11 that Israel approved the construction of another border crossing into the northern Gaza Strip as part of Israeli efforts to boost aid.[23]

The American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) charity resumed aid operations in the Gaza Strip on April 11.[24] ANERA temporarily paused operations following the death of an ANERA staff member and the Israeli strike that killed seven World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid workers

on April 1.[25] ANERA said that Israeli authorities informed them during a meeting that “certain measures would be taken to protect humanitarian aid workers in the Gaza Strip.”[26] Israeli military officials met with several international aid organizations on April 10 to discuss the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.[27]

The United States Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated three entities on April 12 affiliated with Hamas’ offensive cyber and drone operations.[28] The European Union simultaneously imposed sanctions targeting Hamas.[29] These designations are part of broader US efforts to disrupt Hamas’ ability to conduct future attacks.

OFAC sanctioned the following individuals:

- Hamas’ military wing spokesperson Hudhayfa Samir Abdallah al Kahlut (al Kahlut) also known as “Abu Ubaida”
- William Abu Shanab (Abu Shanab)
- Baraa Hasan Farhat (Farhat)
- Khalil Muhammad Azzam (Azzam)

A bipartisan group of US House of Representatives members is introducing legislation to sanction the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) for their role in the October 7 attacks.[30] The PRC is a Palestinian militia aligned with Hamas in the war. The group has claimed multiple attacks targeting Israeli forces and Israel during IDF ground operations.[31] Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA) stated that the militia has “flown under the radar and avoided real consequences for their horrific crimes.”[32] The legislation also requires the US Department of State to issue a report on whether to designate the PRC and the West Bank-based Lion’s Den group as terrorist organizations.[33]

Palestinian fighters did not conduct any indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on April 12.

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

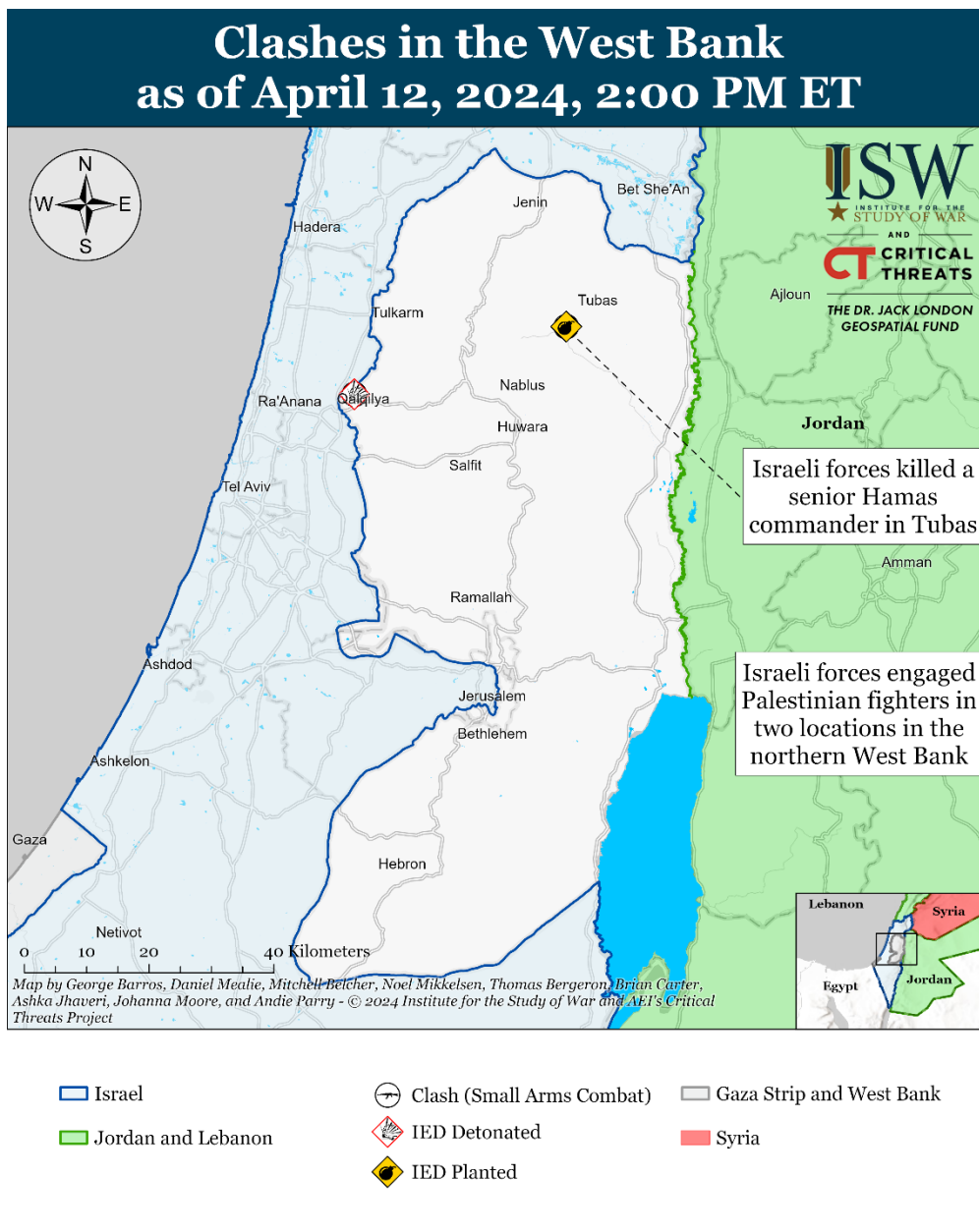
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in two locations in the northern West Bank on April 12.[34] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades fired “light weapons” and detonated improvised explosive devices in two separate attacks targeting Israeli forces around Tubas and Qalqilya.[35] Israeli forces detained five wanted individuals in overnight operations across the West Bank.[36]

Israeli forces killed senior Hamas commander Muhammad Omar Daraghmeh in Tubas on April 12.[37] The IDF reported that Daraghmeh shot at Israeli forces who returned fire and killed him. The IDF said that Daraghmeh was a “central Hamas operative” and “promoted” militia activity in the region.[38] Israeli forces killed Daraghmeh’s predecessor “about a month and a half ago,” according to Israeli Army Radio.[39] Hamas confirmed Daraghmeh’s death.[40] Palestinian Authority-affiliated media reported that Israeli forces killed another Palestinian fighter during fighting in al Faraa refugee camp during the raid.[41]

The IDF announced on April 12 that it launched a search and rescue operation for a 14-year-old boy near the Malachi Shalom settlement.[42] Israeli media reported that the IDF air, ground, and special operations forces launched a search and rescue operation with Israeli settlers from Malachi Shalom to find the boy who went missing while herding sheep.[43] The settlers volunteered to assist the IDF. The exact cause of the boy’s disappearance is still unknown.[44]

Israeli and Palestinian media reported violence occurred in al Mughayir, west of Malachi Shalom. Local footage confirms these reports.[45] The IDF confirmed that there were “violent disturbances” in al Mughayir but that the IDF entered the town and removed the Israeli citizens from the town.[46] Israeli and Palestinian media also reported Israeli and Palestinian casualties.[47] Palestinian Authority-affiliated media confirmed that at least one Palestinian civilian died during the violence.[48] The details of these events are unclear. CTP-ISW will provide additional details as information becomes available.



This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

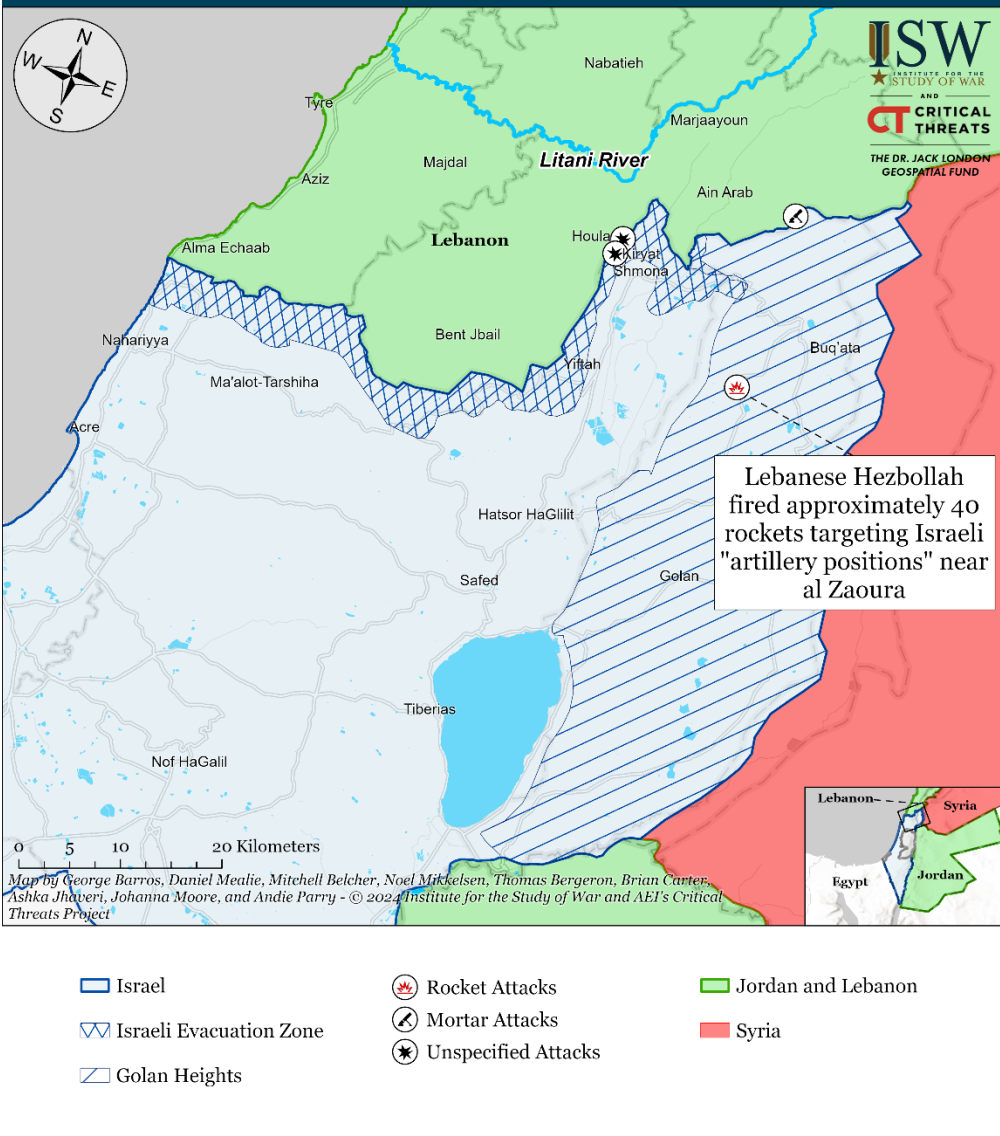
Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least four attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on April 11.[49]

Hezbollah fired approximately 40 rockets targeting Israeli “artillery positions” in al Zaoura in the Golan Heights on April 12.[50] The IDF said that it intercepted some rockets and that the rest of the rockets fell in open areas.[51]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon as of April 12, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Gen. Michael Kurilla continued to meet with Israeli officials in Israel on April 12 to discuss preparations for a possible Iranian attack targeting Israel.[52] Kurilla met with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi to discuss US and Israeli preparations ahead of a potential Iranian attack against Israel.[53] Kurilla also met with other senior Israeli military officials, including IDF spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, on April 11.[54] Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened that they will retaliate against Israel in response to the Israeli airstrike that killed several senior IRGC officers in Damascus on April 1.[55]

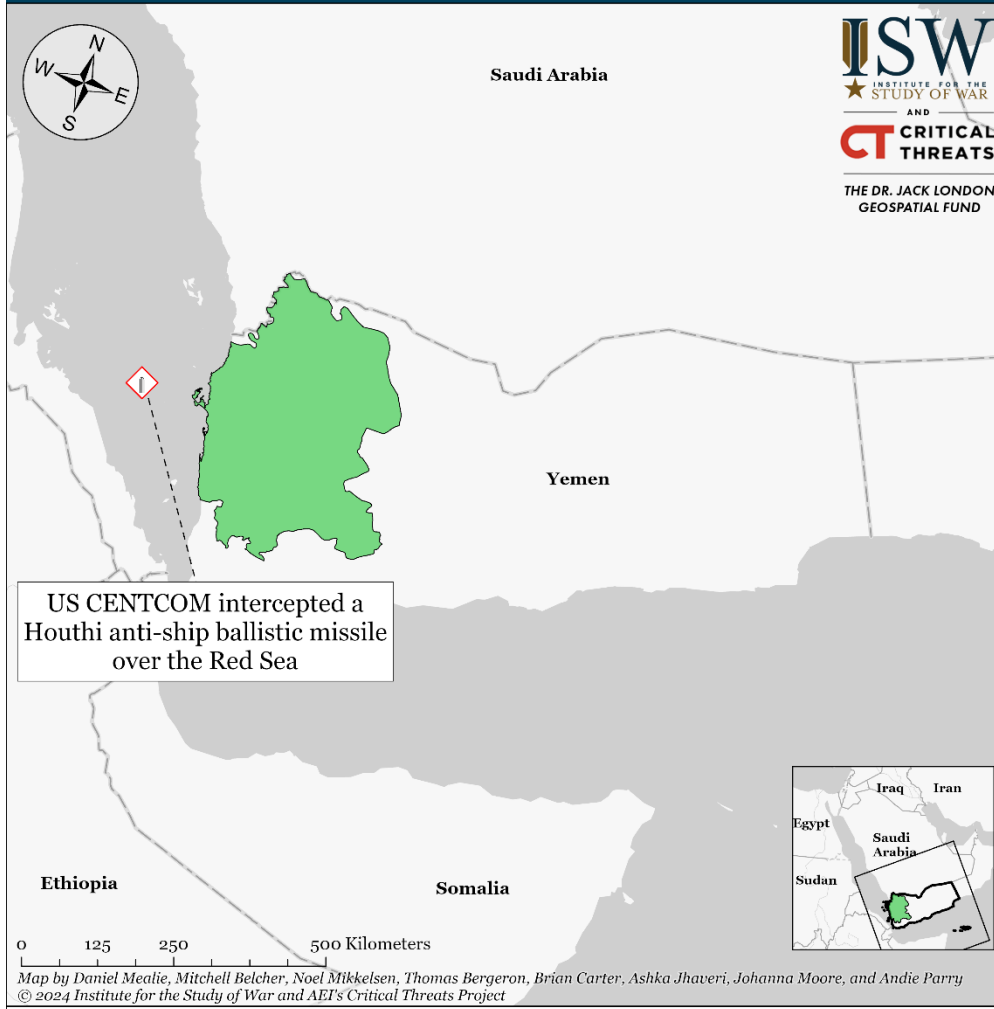
Kurilla’s visit to Israel coincides with heightened US military readiness and warnings of an “imminent” Iranian attack targeting Israel. US media and US government officials said on April 12 that the United States is moving additional assets into the region, including air defenses to protect US forces in Iraq and Syria, in preparation for the “viable threat” of an Iranian attack on Israel.[56] The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the additional assets include two US Navy destroyers.[57] Unspecified US officials also warned that the US and Israel are expecting a “major Iranian attack” using “more than 100 drones and dozens of missiles” on “southern or northern Israel” as early as April 12 or 13.[58] US officials similarly told Western media on April 10 and 11 that an Iranian drone and missile attack targeting Israel was “imminent.”[59]

The present nature of the information space makes it difficult to forecast when precisely Iran might launch a retaliatory strike targeting Israel, if Iran attacks Israel at all. Western estimations of when Iran will conduct an attack have varied and could be subject to change. The likelihood that Iran is spreading disinformation surrounding its strike increases the difficulty of forecasting the timing of the retaliation.[60]

President Ebrahim Raisi and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari discussed recent tensions between Iran and Pakistan during a phone call on April 11.[61] Raisi is scheduled to travel to Pakistan on April 22.[62] He warned that “hegemonic world powers”—a standard Iranian reference to the United States and the West—are attempting to create divisions between Tehran and Islamabad. He also stressed the need for Muslims to reject Salafi-jihadi groups, including ISIS. Raisi also called for information sharing between Pakistan and Iran to “overcome security challenges.”[63] A series of attacks in southeastern Iran since December 2023 by Salafi-jihadi groups operating along the Iran-Pakistan border has strained relations between Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan designated the Zainabiyoun Brigade—an Iran-backed Pakistani Shia militia operating in Syria—as a terrorist organization on April 11.[64] Iran and Pakistan also exchanged missile and drone strikes in January 2024 after Iran targeted anti-regime militants inside Pakistan.[65]

US CENTCOM intercepted a Houthi anti-ship ballistic missile over the Red Sea on April 11.[66] CENTCOM said that the missile was launched from Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen and did not cause any damage to US, coalition, or commercial ships.

Houthi-controlled Territory in Yemen as of April 12, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Map by Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry
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■ Houthi-controlled Territory in Yemen
 ◊ Surface-to-Surface Missile

Note: This notional map is not a definitive assessment of areas under Houthi control in Yemen. This map is primarily an illustrative reference material and does not adhere to the very high level of spatial precision that ISW and CTP uses for our Israel-Hamas and Ukraine control of terrain maps.



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- [18] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17669>
- [19] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1761>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1762>;
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- [20] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1778677942123429920>

- [21] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1778741098313072887>;
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- [34] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1778734071855652950> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6245 ;
https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6246
- [35] https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6245 ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6246
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- [37] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1778734035356786798>
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